



## *The Transformation of the German Press in National Socialist Germany*



*by Reichsleiter Max Amann*

**T**he National Socialist seizure of power gave us the task of forming all of German life according to the spirit of National Socialism. The Führer's difficult fourteen-year struggle gave us the character and methods we needed to meet the challenges. A look back on what had been accomplished in the three and a half years since the National Socialist revolution, with its many actions and decisions, shows us that only it allowed us to fulfill our goals, and that it alone is able to find solutions to the problems facing the German people. We need the compass that the Führer gives us through his model and teachings, and to pledge to follow and remain loyal to that which we learned during the struggle for power. The virtues we learned then led to National Socialism's irresistible victory. Had we not had them, we would not have won power, and had we not maintained them, the power we gained would not have restored health and strength to the German people.



Our opponents during the struggle for power believed that they had a successful attack on us in claiming that the onrushing National Socialism had a party program that was limited to generalities, one that allowed no concrete positions on the problems of public and private life. Besides, the program was only designed to deceive the people, and National Socialism would ignore it once in power.

The Führer had already answered these charges in the party's program: It obligated National Socialists to defend the programmatic goals even at the risk of their lives. Even in the earliest days we believed that the few general principles of the program were better suited to deal with the problems of everyday life than a well-developed theoretical structure. This idea has proven its correctness a thousand times over in the past three and a half years.

I am happy to say that in my areas of endeavour in the party and state, a few National Socialist principles have given me the sure foundation for the many difficult decisions I have made. I am also convinced that the German people and the world public, insofar as it is ready to evaluate the situation objectively, will agree that developments in the German press give daily proof of the correctness and value of our National Socialist principles.

A look back before our seizure of power reminds us how numerous the problems of the press once were. Our few newspapers with their limited circulations fought heroically in the front lines to gain power. They stood against several thousand newspapers that represented other ideas and interests. There were many differences between the leading newspapers back then, but there was one thing they all lacked when compared to the National Socialist press: they had lost their connection to the people. They were responsible not to the people, but to some other group, be it parties, churches, economic interests or corporations, or they looked to their own good without considering the general good of the people. Such a press promoted class struggle, the confusion of social standing, religious incitement or moral decay. They did not promote the good of the individual and the strengthening of the community, rather collapse and decay. These newspapers that appealed to people's lowest instincts had lost their national and moral sense of responsibility, and had little influence.

Such a press could not be tolerated by National Socialism, whose task is the mobilization of all good and healthy strengths of the individual and the community, encouraging their expression and development. The German people is being rescued from a fragmentation of parties, classes, interests and special interests to enable them it to find its own nature and its own strengths once more. This requires that the whole of the German press serve German tasks. Our party's press is always a model, for it developed only to serve the idea and thereby the people. The exhausting everyday work aims at reaching that end.

That makes clear the goal of the National Socialism in the area of the press. All that is necessary is to follow a very few National Socialist principles.



1. The good of the German people was the goal from the beginning. The party's fight and our positions on individual issues were never ends in themselves, but rather they illuminated each aspect of our efforts in the light of the whole. We knew that the people were our highest treasure. We never wanted to impose an alien dictatorial system, but rather through the work of each individual National Socialist to win the confidence of the people. That is the prerequisite for leadership. Loyalty to the people and concern for their welfare is the foundation of the will and actions of National Socialism.

This led to my first task: the transformation of the German press into a true German people's press, a press that eliminated harmful, selfish or foreign elements and served only the people and its welfare. That means that the reader is no longer the object of a press that is harmful or foreign to him. Rather the principle guiding the press is the good of the individual and the community. A government that has as its only task securing the future of the nation can create such a press, and only such a state. In it, the interests of the state, of the community and of the individual agree. What is it that the reader wants from his newspaper? It should acquaint him with daily events both large and small, letting him know how these affect his life and how he can help the whole community. The newspaper should bring him into contact with the community and the community into contact with him, putting him in the centre of what is happening. Besides meeting the needs of the individual and the community, which is the highest goal of the press, it should also satisfy his need for relaxation.

The press has a role in the daily life of every citizen, man, women or maturing youth, that cannot be filled by anything else, and the state has the duty to ensure that it can fulfil its role. Any state that is not an end in itself has the duty to see that the only goal of the press is to serve the people. That is why the Führer supported a people's press at the very beginning, and commented on the harmful effects of the press at the time in "Mein Kampf." He declared that it was the duty of the state to stop any misuse of this instrument of public opinion.

2. The idea of the equality of all people stood in contrast to the National Socialist principle of the creative power of personality. The responsibility of the individual replaced the irresponsibility of the masses. The accomplishment principle replaced all other principles for evaluating people. We could therefore have no doubt that the principle of accomplishment also applied to the press, that it was the foundation of a press that served the people. It can be controlled only by people who have the necessary prerequisites of character and will for these important tasks.

As in every area of life, here too competition is important to the full development of abilities. Accomplishment and creativity are therefore the marks of the press in a National Socialist state. All governmental measures concerning the press must serve these principles.

This rules out monopoly control of the press by any single hand. Despite all predictions to the contrary, it is also clear that private ownership of the press, as long



as it is consistent with National Socialist views, has been maintained. This is compelling proof for our faithfulness to our party program and the depth of our adherence to the correctness of its principles, since otherwise it would have been easy for us to establish a party-owned press monopoly. That certainly would have been pleasanter for the party press itself. But the party did not choose the comfortable way. In the past three and a half years its own press too has been subordinate to these principles. The party press faced competition and had to improve. It has gained its position as the politically leading press by its own efforts.

3. The affirmation of the creative power of personality and accomplishment in the press proves the falsity of our opponents' claims about National Socialism plans and ideas. Supposedly the press would lose all independence by state ownership and control of its content.

To the contrary, we have created the foundations for a truly independent press!

In the past, the so-called freedom of the press did not mean the press served the people, only that it was independent of the state. It was, however, left under the control of other powers and influences. The freedom of the press can only be secured when it is free from every kind of dependence. The first prerequisite is that only worthy and appropriate people are able to work in the press. The press must also have a sound economic foundation that removes any possibility of influencing it by financial means. Our principle of guaranteeing that the press is formed by the creative power of personality assures the freedom of its contents from outside influences, for such personalities would not work in the press if their abilities were restricted. We also know that a press that is the people's best comrade in their daily struggles can develop only from the work of the newspaper itself. A relationship between reader and the newspaper requires a precise knowledge of the needs of the readership. Also, we have not interfered with, and will not interfere in the future, with the mature variety of the German press, unique in all the world. Such variety would be destroyed by central control of its contents. Of course, the way in which the important questions of a nation are discussed in public does require that the state protect the people from harm. A state that fails in its duty to protect the people from such damaging press activity has lost its right to exist, for the people, not the press is the measure of all things!

Thus the National Socialist state does influence the press with regard to the vital issues of the nation. The newspaper must serve the whole. In areas where only the state is able to judge what is necessary, it has priority. The press still depends entirely on the work of its members. That is not interfering in the press, but rather a way of increasing its value for the people and the nation by preventing the press from doing great harm. Germany would today not have regained its military freedom or the Rhine land, it would not have borders guarded by weapons and aircraft, it would have no super highways and major buildings, but it would have seven million more unemployed, if the value of such measures had been argued in the press. The result when the press is not subject to such restrictions is clear from Germany's terrible fate after the World War.





My most important goal is to protect our press from outside influence. The seriousness with which the state takes the independence of the press is proven by its laws, for through the Reich Chamber of Culture Law and the Editor's Law the press itself has the responsibility of fulfilling its mission. This is in contrast to all other countries in the world, where press control is exercised by the police.

Only the application of these principles can ensure that the press serves the good of the community. This is clear from the devastating example of the press before National Socialism, which never was concerned with that issue. The goal was never to protect the people, but to serve the press as an end in itself. It was of no interest if the press were bought by some force and used to harm the people. Nor did it care if the makers of the press had the ability to say something to the people that was in its interest. The talk of freedom of the press only made the individual defenceless against the misuse of the press.

All the measures National Socialism has implemented flow from these principles. These include the Reich Chamber of Culture Law, the regulations of the Reich Chamber of Culture, the Editor's Law, and the Advertising Council of the German Economy. The Reich Chamber of Culture and the Editor's Law view the press not as an end in itself, but as the work of creative personalities. They therefore involve everyone working in the press and give them appropriate guidelines. Finally, the legal prerequisites for implement the principle exist. Only those of ability and character may use the instrument of the press. These laws provide the basis for excluding all those elements who would misuse the press, and open the way for those with ability. Through these laws and regulations, we have done solid National Socialist work. Let me summarize the most important measures and their results.

1. All non-Aryans and those with non-Aryan relatives are prohibited from working in the press. The German press today is produced by Germans and is an expression of German culture and the German soul.

2. All special interests and organizations who oppose the unity of the nation, whether of economic or religious nature, as well as all their advocates and functionaries have been eliminated from the German press. The German press no longer is divided into segments that serve classes, churches and economic interests, but rather it serves the entirety of the German people. All those working in the press are obliged to serve only the common good of the German people.

3. We have also excluded all those from the German press who lacked the necessary abilities. This includes elements that used the press to split rather than unify, those to whom the people was not the highest value, who used religion to fragment the nation, who saw the press only as a business. We have ruthlessly removed them all. The whole German press today is worthy of its task.



4. We have made personal responsibility the foundation of the press, and eliminated such influences as those of anonymous capital or intermediaries for third parties.

5. Subventions or other support for the press, regardless of their form, are forbidden, and thus the possibility of corruption is ruled out.

On the other hand, we have done all in our power to provide a firm economic foundation for publishers. Among many other measures, the regulations on advertising from the Advertising Council of the German Economy serve this goal. Above all, we have reduced the total number of newspapers, which was the result of the former identification of parts of the press with various special interests. The result is that the economic health of the newspaper industry has increased, and promises good social and economic conditions in the future .

6. We have insisted that the press has intellectual and cultural public responsibilities for everyone, whether editor or publisher, and have eliminated any idea of the press as an end in itself. The economic functions too serve the intellectual goals of the press. We have removed all involvement in the press from those companies that had a purely economic interest. This guarantees that the press serves the people, not private interests that may harm them.

7. We have made known to those in the German press the importance of their tasks, which obliges them to work to the best of their abilities. It is now self-evident to all those working in the German press that their work is based on the foundation of truth, the protection of individual honour, regard for morality and national discipline.

8. Earlier the members of the press fought amongst themselves. We have formed a profession involving them all, regardless of function, and thus built the foundation for a professional outlook suited to the magnitude of their responsibilities.

The success of our measures is evident in the growth of the publishing firms as well as in the increase in the total circulation of the German press. Our enemies once predicted that the victory of National Socialist would mean the end of the German press. This prophecy has proved as false as all their others.

Before National Socialist legislation, the circulation of the press was uncertain. There was no law requiring accurate figures be given, and there were various ways of determining circulation. We defined the concept and required that accurate figures be given. There are about 17 million households in Germany. The circulation of the German daily press in the first quarter of 1936 was 19,700,000. That means that every German home receives a newspaper, without even considering magazines.

There are still some prophets, mostly among the emigrants, who cannot stop lying. These boys believe that the reduced number of German newspapers is proof of the correctness of their former prophesies. Let me speak clearly to that:



The strength and impact of the German press has not declined simply because the number of individual newspapers is less. We have gotten rid of the sensational press along with all the other newspapers that served something other than the German people. The 2,000 papers that today serve the German people are worth far more to us than the 3,250 papers of the past that to a significant degree worshiped at altars other than the fatherland, and which therefore had to be sacrificed for the fatherland!

And what better evidence for the strength of the German press is there than that despite the reduction in the number of newspapers, the total circulation has increased! To those prophets I have this to say: Just as the German people have defeated forces harmful to them and thereby regained their freedom and strength, so too the German press has been freed from these elements and has its lasting place in Germany. I might also give them the good advice to direct their attention to the press in other nations.

In my address to the party congress last year I referred to the criticism of the press levied by leading statesmen in the western democracies. Today I will discuss the press in a country that is carrying out a revolutionary transformation of the press: Soviet Russia.

It is obvious that Jewish Bolshevism is using entirely different press principles than we National Socialists. That is clear even in the way it implements its policies. We retained all the valuable principles of the past, but in Russia they have followed the principle of destruction. We have kept that which honestly served the German people, but Bolshevism began by destroying everything that existed. We retained individual personality, initiative and competition as the foundations of the press, and also private property. In Communist Russia, as in everything else they established a monopoly of the state, the unions and the collectives. Our whole purpose was to build a press that served the German people, while Bolshevism tolerated only a proletarian class press that strove to eliminate all not in the ruling class. It is no surprise that their journalists are almost entirely Jewish. Jewish control of the press system is more advanced than any other area of the Soviet state.

The content of our press is determined by the needs of the people, whereas the contents of the communist press are determined by the press department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. It also has censorship authority. Furthermore, each edition of a newspaper must pass state censorship before it can be distributed. The rules and administrative system rule out any independence on the part of the press. It is merely an instrument of Jewish class rule. Given the nature of communist doctrine, it is obvious that all moral and national virtues are entirely lacking, or are the targets of the communist press' campaign of annihilation.

Given communist doctrine and its attitude toward the press, it is also obvious that not only the press, but also journalists themselves are under the state. Government regulations control every aspect of journalistic activity. Detailed rules determine their compensation and activities. This makes particularly clear the nonsense of communist



planning. It is not surprising that there are few communist journalists, since their economic position is very bad. As an example, even after a pay increase several years ago, only about 10% of provincial journalists even owned a pocket watch.

Our press can depend on competition and a sound and responsible leadership on the part of publishers. The monopoly of the press in Russia has completely destroyed its economic foundations. Aside from the three Moscow newspapers, all Russian newspapers lose money and required government subventions of 30 million rubles in 1930. The elimination of personality and competition naturally, the logical result of communist teaching, replaced sound economics. The people had to pay for the resulting losses. The communist planned economy took intellectual and business matters from the publishers, leaving them only with the organizational and technical aspects of putting out a newspaper. The state makes all the important decisions. It determines the newspaper's planning, its circulation area, its circulation, its content. Its postal monopoly controls the distribution. The advertising business, also a monopoly, is entirely insignificant as a result of the communist economic system.

Building the Russian system on foundations entirely different from those of National Socialism naturally led to grotesque consequences. The newspapers' content is bad. The level of the average journalist in the Soviet Union is low. "Pravda," the leading communist newspaper, recently published a letter that said: "We have few journalists with initiative who can handle a question independently." Most editors have passed only a middle-level exam in Russian writing, and many are semi-illiterate. Many articles as a result have several authors, since no single journalist is able to write them. The 18 June 1936 issue of "Pravda" provides examples of poor reporting even from the sole official Russian news agency "TASS." The leading communist newspaper has been carrying regular articles about the complete inadequacy of the Russian press.

The same deficiencies are evident in every area. The distribution of newspapers and magazines is the result more of accident than orderly plan. The members of the Bolshevik government responsible for the press were unable to conceal its catastrophic failures and weaknesses at the communist press congress this past May. They mentioned the obvious weaknesses in journalists' knowledge of simple political and economic matters, which had to be publicly criticized, and added that newspapers and magazines are often distributed irregularly. As an example, magazines dated in January saw the light of the day only in March or April. The propaganda chief of the Communist Party said: "This is true contempt for the subscribers. Those responsible must be punished." This communist spokesman forgot to mention only that these problems are not accidental, but rather the result of the application of communist principles.

The Soviet press catastrophe shows with frightening clarity what would have happened to the German press and our other cultural values if National Socialism had not rescued our people and fatherland from the hands of Jewish Bolshevism.





When the Führer returned from the war as an unknown soldier and began his struggle to rescue the German nation, he had nothing but his own will. The press of the whole world was against him, above all the press of self-serving parties. Here, too, the National Socialist state changed the face of Germany. The face of the German press today reflects the living soul and creativity of the German people.

We have not found it necessary to harm our people by making experiments with uncertain outcomes. We have not wasted party or government money. Our only capital was the incomparable experience of a 14-year struggle and the unshakable will to solve the tasks the Führer gave us. We established the economic foundation of the German press on National Socialist principles, and built upon that foundation.

Old National Socialists always think back to the spirit of the period of struggle. When one battle was finished, the Führer stood before us and gave the order "the fight continues." These words are the best expression of the laws we follow in working for the German people, for they command us never to tire or rest until our work is done.

The slogan today is the same as always. Then the struggle was to gain control of state power. Today our task is to work every day to fulfil the meaning of the National Socialist seizure of power: to make the nation healthy and strong in all areas by realizing the program of the movement.

My Führer! In the past years the measures we have taken, in close cooperation with our party comrade Dr. Goebbels, have fulfilled point 23 of our party platform.

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**The source:** "Die Neugestaltung der deutschen Presse im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland," *Der Parteitag der Ehre vom 8. bis 14. September 1936. Offizieller Bericht über den Verlauf des Reichsparteitages mit sämtlichen Kongreßreden* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP., 1936), pp. 212-224.